



Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts suffer huge declines in membership

America's most iconic youth organizations – the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of the USA – have been jolted by unprecedented one-year drops in membership, due partly to the pandemic, and partly to social trends that have been shrinking their ranks for decades. While both organizations insist they'll survive, the dramatic declines raise questions about how effectively they'll be able to carry out their time-honored missions -- teaching skills and teamwork, providing outdoor adventure, encouraging community service. Membership for the BSA's flagship Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA programs dropped from 1.97 million in 2019 to 1.12 million in 2020, a 43% plunge, according

to figures provided to The Associated Press. Court records show membership has fallen further since then, to about 762,000.

The Girl Scouts say their youth membership fell by nearly 30%, from about 1.4 million in 2019- 2020 to just over 1 million this year.

Both groups, like several other U.S. youth organizations, have experienced declining membership for many years. The Girl Scouts reported youth membership of about 2.8 million in 2003. The BSA had more than 4 million boys participating in the 1970s.

Reasons for the drop include competition from sports leagues, a perception by some families that they are old-fashioned, and busy family schedules.

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This June 7, 2021 file photo shows the headquarters of Girl Scouts of New Mexico Trails in Albuquerque, N.M.

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The pandemic brought a particular challenge.

In Lawrence, New Jersey, 8-year-old Joey Yaros stopped attending meetings while most in-person gatherings were shut down, and might not go back, even though his father and three brothers all earned the elite Eagle Scout rank. Joey was already struggling with virtual school classes, and the family didn't pressure him to also participate in virtual Cub Scout activities.

"If there are den meetings in the fall, we'll see if he gets back in the swing of it," said his father, high school history teacher Jay Yaros. "There are a lot of interesting things for kids to do these days, and scouting doesn't seem to be keeping up."

The Boy Scouts' problems



In this June 10, 2021 photo provided by Barry Bedlan, members of Troop 298 of Frisco, Texas are among the first to embark a 12-day trek across the Philmont Scout Ranch, outside Cimarron, N.M.

Associated Press

are compounded by their decision to seek bankruptcy protection in February 2020 to cope with thou-

sands of lawsuits filed by men who allege they were molested as youngsters by scout leaders. The case is proceeding slowly in federal bankruptcy court as lawyers negotiate creation of a trust fund for victims that will likely entail hundreds of millions of dollars in contributions from the BSA and its 252 local councils.

To provide those funds, some councils may have to sell cherished camp properties, the BSA's president and CEO, Roger Mosby, told the AP.

"We understand that this is a difficult and often emotional decision, but in some instances may be a necessary step as we work toward our shared imperatives of equitably compensating survivors and continuing Scouting's mission." Mosby said in a written reply to AP's queries.

The pandemic, the membership drop and rising costs of liability insurance have strained BSA finances. A disclosure statement in the bankruptcy case says its gross revenues dropped from \$394 million in 2019 to \$187 million last year.

In response, the Boy Scouts'

annual youth membership fee will rise from \$66 to \$72 on August 1. The BSA also says some councils may merge to consolidate resources.

The Girl Scouts have bureaucratic complications of their own. There is ongoing litigation pitting the national headquarters against two of the 111 local councils — based in Fairbanks, Alaska, and Nashville, Tennessee — which refuse to implement a nationwide technology platform.

Despite the varied challenges, Mosby and other Boy Scout officials, as well as the Girl Scouts' leadership, say there's reason for optimism. They say their summer camps are full, special events are sold out, and they're expecting many thousands of families — some new to scouting, some who left during the pandemic — to sign up now that activities are occurring in-person rather than virtually.

"We knew some girls would take a pause," said Girl Scouts spokeswoman Kelly Parisi. "But as the pandemic goes in the rear-view mirror, we've seen a substantial rebound... We feel really good going into the fall recruitment."

Membership in the Boy Scouts' Longhorn Council, which serves parts of Central and North Texas, dropped by 44% from 2019 to 2020, said its chief executive, Wendy Shaw. But she is buoyed by surging interest this year from families considering their first foray into scouting; the council has scheduled 12 special events for them.

Manny Ramos, chief executive of the BSA's Seattle-area council, said pandemic-related restrictions on group activities were rigorous in his area — a factor in recruiting only 500 scouts last fall instead of the normal 3,000 or more. To main-

tain interest, his staff held numerous outdoor activities, including winter camping, and now anticipates a large influx of families who skipped scouting last year.

Bryan Koch of Madison, Wisconsin, has been an adult leader for more than a decade as two sons went through Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. He believes the programs have invaluable benefits: teaching leadership skills, offering adventures such as a 78-mile hike at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico that his eldest son completed as a 14-year-old.

"I'm a firm believer in what scouting can be," Koch said. "It helps us develop more well-rounded and aware young men and women. That's sorely needed in our country right now." Yet he says membership in his Boy Scout troop dropped by 30% in recent years as boys and parents turned to other activities.

"There's not really a passive way to go through scouting and get the full experience," Koch said. "It takes a lot of time for the scout, for the parents."

Josh Garner has been scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 30 in Jackson, Mississippi, for six years; his oldest son will soon be an Eagle Scout. Troop membership has dropped by 25% during his tenure, and even more sharply in the Cub Scout pack that's also sponsored by St. Richard Catholic Church.

Garner said the BSA's national leadership "has a lot of baggage right now" and needs to devise better recruitment strategies. Yet he'd hate to see the organization fold.

"I've watched boys learn all kinds of skills, from welding to giving speeches," he said. "It's a fantastic program — too important to a lot of people for it to just go away." □

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Travellers' Choice 2020

Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dies at 88

By ROBERT BURNS

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Rumsfeld, the two-time defense secretary and one-time presidential candidate whose reputation as a skilled bureaucrat and visionary of a modern U.S. military was unraveled by the long and costly Iraq war, died Tuesday. He was 88. In a statement Wednesday, Rumsfeld's family said he "was surrounded by family in his beloved Taos, New Mexico."

President George W. Bush, under whom Rumsfeld served as Pentagon chief, hailed his "steady service as a wartime secretary of defense — a duty he carried out with strength, skill, and honor."

Regarded by former colleagues as equally smart and combative, patriotic and politically cunning, Rumsfeld had a storied career in government under four presidents and nearly a quarter century in corporate America.

After retiring in 2008 he headed the Rumsfeld Foundation to promote public service and to work with charities that provide services and support for military families and wounded veterans.

"Rummy," as he was often called, was ambitious, witty, energetic, engaging and capable of great personal warmth. But he irritated many with his confrontational style. An accomplished wrestler in college, Rumsfeld relished verbal sparring and elevated it to



In this Oct. 11, 2011, file photo, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld speaks to politicians and academics during a luncheon on security in rising Asia, in Taipei, Taiwan.

Associated Press

an art form; a biting humor was a favorite weapon.

Still, he built a network of loyalists who admired his work ethic, intelligence and impatience with all who failed to share his sense of urgency.

Rumsfeld is the only person to serve twice as Pentagon chief. The first time, in 1975-77, he was the youngest ever. The next time, in 2001-06, he was the oldest.

He made a brief run for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination, a spectacular flop that he once described as humbling for a man used to success at the highest levels of the government, including stints as White House chief of staff, U.S. ambassador and member of Congress.

For all Rumsfeld's achievements, it was the setbacks in Iraq in the twilight of his

career that will likely etch the most vivid features of his legacy.

Nine months into his second tour as defense secretary, on Sept. 11, 2001, suicide hijackers attacked the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, thrusting the nation into wars for which the military was ill-prepared. Rumsfeld oversaw the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan

and toppling of the Taliban regime. Frequently presiding at televised briefings on the war, Rumsfeld became something of a TV star, applauded for his blunt talk and uncompromising style. By 2002 the Bush administration's attention shifted to Iraq, which played no role in the Sept. 11 attacks. The war effort in Afghanistan took a back seat to Iraq, opening the way for the Taliban to make a comeback and prevent the U.S. from sealing the success of its initial invasion.

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was launched in March 2003. Baghdad fell quickly, but U.S. and allied forces soon became consumed with a violent insurgency. Critics faulted Rumsfeld for dismissing the pre-invasion assessment of the Army's top general, Eric Shinseki, that several hundred thousand allied troops would be needed to stabilize Iraq.

Rumsfeld twice offered his resignation to President George W. Bush in 2004 amid disclosures that U.S. troops had abused detainees at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison — an episode he later referred to as his darkest hour as defense secretary. Not until November 2006, after Democrats gained control of Congress by riding a wave of antiwar sentiment, did Bush finally decide Rumsfeld had to go. He left office in December, replaced by Robert Gates. Rumsfeld is survived by his wife, Joyce, three children and seven grandchildren. □

WH aims to help consumers with order on big business regs

By JOSH BOAK

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is preparing an executive order to improve opportunities for consumers and small businesses by stepping up oversight of areas of the economy that are dominated by a select few companies, such as meatpacking and internet service providers.

The order has yet to be finalized, but the overarching goal is to promote a sense of competition that the administration believes is central to capitalism, said a person

familiar with the order who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss its details. The order reflects concern that the concentration of power causes higher prices and poorer quality services.

The order would direct federal agencies to enforce existing rules to help competition. In some cases, this could mean dismantling regulations that preserve power for larger companies. Two clear targets would be ending non-compete agreements that limit how much money a worker can earn by switching employers and

addressing a meat-processing sector that is largely controlled by four major companies.

The move could be controversial among conservative lawmakers who favor less government intervention into the economy. However, some Republican lawmakers have opposed noncompete agreements, with Florida Sen. Marco Rubio introducing a bill in 2019 to end them for entry level, low-wage workers.

President Joe Biden has made no secret of his belief that a concentration of corporate power could

come at the expense of workers. "The president made clear during his campaign that he is committed to increasing competition in the American economy, including by banning noncompete agreements for workers and protecting farmers from abusive practices, but there is no final decision on any actions at this time," said White House spokesperson Emilie Simons.

Politico and The Wall Street Journal previously reported that an order would be signed soon on the matter. □

Actor Allison Mack gets 3 years in NXIVM sex-slave case

By TOM HAYS
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — TV actor Allison Mack, who played a key role in the scandal-ridden, cult-like group NXIVM, was sentenced to three years in prison Wednesday on charges she manipulated women into becoming sex slaves for the group's spiritual leader.

Mack — best known for her role as a young Superman's close friend on the series "Smallville" — had previously pleaded guilty to the charges and began cooperating against NXIVM leader Keith Raniere. Prosecutors credited her with helping them mount evidence showing how Raniere created a secret society of brainwashed women who were branded with his initials.

At her sentencing in Brooklyn federal court, Mack renounced the self-improvement guru.

"I made choices I will forever regret," she said, also telling the judge she was filled with "remorse and guilt."

"I am sorry to those of you that I brought into NXIVM," she wrote in a letter filed with the court last week. "I am sorry I ever exposed you to the nefarious and emotionally abusive schemes of a twisted man."

She reiterated her apolo-



Allison Mack, center, leaves federal court with her mother Mindy Mack after being sentenced, Wednesday, June 30, 2021, in New York.

Associated Press

gies to the victims in court on Wednesday: "From the deepest part of my heart and soul, I am sorry."

Mack wept at times while reading her statement to the court. U.S. District Judge Nicholas Garaufis told her he believed her apology was sincere, but said she deserved a serious sentence for using her celebrity to groom victims as "a willing and proactive ally" and "essential accomplice to Raniere's monstrous crimes."

Under advisory sentenc-

ing guidelines, Mack had faced between 14 and 17 1/2 years behind bars, but her defense team argued in court papers that probation or a sentence to home confinement was more appropriate. Prosecutors had agreed that any prison term should be below the guidelines range because of her cooperation.

"The NXIVM saga and the story of Ms. Mack's descent have been a tragedy for all involved. But that need not, and should not, be the end of the story for Allison

Mack," her lawyers wrote in court papers.

A victim, Jessica Joan, rejected Mack's apologies, telling the judge the actor deserved no mercy.

"She can blame Keith all she wants but she is a monster cut from the same cloth," Joan said in court on Wednesday. "Allison Mack is a predator and an evil human being."

Mack, 38, was once part of the inner circle of Raniere, whose group attracted millionaires and actors among its adherents. Prosecutors

said she became a "master" for "slaves" she ordered "to perform labor, take nude photographs, and in some cases, to engage in sex acts with Raniere."

As authorities closed in on Raniere, he fled to Mexico with Mack and others to try to reconstitute the group there. He was arrested and sent to the United States in March 2018; Mack was arrested a few days later.

"Ms. Mack now understands that this was the best thing that could have happened to her at that time," the defense papers said.

Mack provided information to prosecutors about how Raniere, now 60, encouraged "the use of demeaning and derogatory language, including racial slurs, to humiliate 'slaves,'" the government papers said. More importantly, she provided a recording of a conversation she had with Raniere about the branding, they added.

The branding should involve "a vulnerable position type of a thing" with "hands probably above the head being held, almost like being tied down, like sacrificial, whatever," Raniere told her. The women, he added, "should say, 'Please brand me. It would be an honor.' Or something like that." □

Girl, 13, sues Florida over transgender school athletes ban

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — A 13-year-old transgender girl sued Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Wednesday over a new law that will prevent her from playing girls sports at public schools, arguing that the ban is discriminatory and will deprive her of opportunities.

The Broward County girl, Daisy, has played on girls soccer teams since she was 7, but will no longer be able to do so on school teams under the law that takes effect Thursday.

Participating in sports has given her leadership skills and provided her a social network and support system, according to the

lawsuit filed on her behalf by the Human Rights Campaign in a federal court in Fort Lauderdale. The lawsuit only identifies her as "D.N." to protect her privacy. The group said her name is Daisy. She also planned to try out for a high school volleyball team.

"Depriving her of these opportunities will have a long-term impact on her future. It also will create a sense of shame and diminish her positive sense of self, which can have lifelong consequences," the suit says. The new law "also sends a message to (Daisy's) current and future teammates that there is something wrong with her."

DeSantis signed the bill on June 1, the first day of Pride Month. The bill requires anyone participating in girls athletics to have an original birth certificate that states they are female.

"Ron DeSantis made a conscious choice to sign an anti-LGBTQ bill on the very first day that we are celebrating Pride," said Alphonso David, president of the Human Rights Campaign. "DeSantis decided to take that day to attack the community. It was not lost on us that he did that as political theater, but this bill that he signed has real-world negative implications for transgender people in Florida."

DeSantis's office didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

When he signed the "Fairness in Women's Sports Act" at Christian school surrounded by student athletes, DeSantis was asked why he was doing so on the first day of Pride Month.

"It's not a message to anything other than saying we're going to protect fairness in women's sports. We believe that it's important to have integrity in the competition and we think it's important that they can compete in a level playing field," DeSantis replied.

Daisy began taking hormone blockers to stop testosterone when she was 11

and began receiving estrogen this year, according to the lawsuit. It says because of the treatments, she has no competitive advantage because of her sex assigned at birth.

"If (Daisy) does not have the option to play girls' sports in high school and college, she will not be able to play sports at all and will lose the benefits of being part of the team network that has supported her emotionally and psychologically," the lawsuit said. "She may be isolated and face emotional and mental confusion and emotional distress during this critical period of her social and psychological development." □

Pope to meet with Canada Indigenous amid demands for apology

By NICOLE WINFIELD

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis has agreed to meet in December with Indigenous survivors of Canada's notorious residential schools amid calls for a papal apology for the Catholic Church's role in the abuse and deaths of thousands of native children.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops said Francis had invited the delegations to the Vatican and would meet separately with three groups First Nations, Metis and Inuit during their Dec. 17-20 visit. The pope will then preside over a final audience with all three groups Dec. 20, the conference said in a statement Tuesday.

The Vatican didn't confirm the visit Wednesday, but the Holy See's in-house news portal reported on the bishops' statement. The Canadian bishops said the trip was contingent on the pandemic and that the delegations would include survivors of the residential schools, Indigenous elders and youths, as well as Indigenous leaders and Canadian bishops.

In recent weeks, investigators using ground-penetrating radar have reported finding hundreds of unmarked graves at the sites of two residential schools



In this June 6, 2021 file photo, Pope Francis speaks from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican to a crowd of faithful and pilgrims gathered for the Sunday Angelus noon prayer.

Associated Press

for Indigenous children. The discoveries more than 600 graves in one school, 215 bodies in another have revived calls, including from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, for the pope to make a formal apology. From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend state-funded Christian boarding schools in an effort to assimilate them

into Canadian society. Thousands of children died there of disease and other causes, with many never returned to their families. Nearly three-quarters of the 130 residential schools were run by Roman Catholic missionary congregations, with others operated by the Presbyterian, Anglican and United churches have apologized for their roles in the abuse.

The Canadian bishops didn't mention the demand for a papal apology in the statement, saying only that Francis was "deeply committed to hearing directly from Indigenous peoples."

It said he had personally

The government formally apologized for the policy and abuses in 2008. In addition, the Presbyterian, Anglican and United churches have apologized for their roles in the abuse.

The Argentine pope, however, has apologized for the sins and crimes committed by the Catholic Church against Indigenous peoples during the colonial era conquest of the Americas. □

invited the delegations of Indigenous and would use the meetings for "expressing his heartfelt closeness, addressing the impact of colonization and the role of the Church in the residential school system, in the hopes of responding to the suffering of Indigenous peoples and the ongoing effects of intergenerational trauma."

A papal apology was one of 94 recommendations from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but the Canadian bishops conference said in 2018 that the pope could not personally apologize for the residential schools.

Pope Benedict XVI, who retired in 2013, met with some former students and victims in 2009 and told them of his "personal anguish" over their suffering. But he offered no apology.

After last month's discovery of the 215 bodies, Francis too expressed his pain and pressed religious and political authorities to shed light on "this sad affair."

But he didn't offer an apology, either.

The Argentine pope, however, has apologized for the sins and crimes committed by the Catholic Church against Indigenous peoples during the colonial era conquest of the Americas. □

Israel reaches compromise with settlers on West Bank outpost

By JOSEPH KRAUSS and JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel has reached a compromise with Jewish settlers who rapidly established an unauthorized outpost in the occupied West Bank last month, officials and the settlers said Wednesday.

Under the agreement, the settlers will leave by the end of the week. The area will become a closed military zone, but the houses and roads will remain in place. A survey will be carried out that the settlers say will prove the outpost was not established on land privately owned by Palestinians. That would pave the way authorization, allowing them to establish a religious school and for some families to return.

The settlers named the outpost Eviatar, after an Israeli killed by a Palestinian in 2013, and say it is home to dozens of families. It posed an early test for Israel's new government, which relies on a fragile coalition including parties that support and oppose the settlers.

Palestinians in nearby villages say the outpost was built on their land and fear it will grow and merge with larger settlements nearby. They have held near-daily protests against the outpost in which demonstrators hurl stones at Israeli troops, who fire tear gas and live ammunition. At least four protesters, including two teenagers, have been killed in the clashes.

The settlers announced

a compromise earlier this week at a celebratory press conference, while the government said negotiations were still underway. This time, Israeli officials signaled it was a done deal. Israeli Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked, a member of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's pro-settler party, tweeted that the deal is "an important achievement" for the settlement movement and thanked the "pioneers of Eviatar." Public Security Minister Omer Barlev, from the left-wing Labor Party, welcomed the evacuation of the settlers from the "illegal outpost."

Yossi Dagan, head of a settler council in the northern West Bank, said the plan "is not the outline of our



Israeli settlers pray at the outpost of Eviatar near the northern Palestinian West Bank town of Nablus, Sunday, June 27, 2021.

Associated Press

dreams" but was struck for the benefit of Israeli unity. Daniella Weiss, the head of the settler group behind the outpost, said the survey would confirm the area is state land but might slightly adjust its boundaries.

She expects the religious school will be established by the Jewish High Holidays in September, with living quarters for families connected to the school. □

Kim berates North Korean officials for 'crucial' virus lapse

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un berated top officials for failures in coronavirus prevention that caused a "great crisis," using strong language that raised the specter of a mass outbreak in a country that would be scarcely able to handle it. The state media report Wednesday did not specify what "crucial" lapse had prompted Kim to call the Politburo meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, but experts said North Korea could be wrestling with a significant setback in its pandemic fight.

So far, North Korea has claimed to have had no coronavirus infections, despite testing thousands of people and sharing a porous border with China. Experts widely doubt the claim and are concerned about any potential outbreak, given the country's poor health infrastructure. At the Politburo meeting, Kim criticized the senior officials for supposed incompetence, irresponsibility and passiveness in planning and executing anti-virus measures amid the lengthening pandemic, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said. Kim said "senior officials in



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un speaks during a Politburo meeting of the ruling Workers' Party in Pyongyang, North Korea, Tuesday, June 29, 2021.

charge of important state affairs neglected the implementation of the important decisions of the party on taking organizational, institutional, material, scientific and technological measures as required by the prolonged state emergency epidemic prevention campaign," according to KCNA. This "caused a crucial case of creating a great crisis in ensuring the security of the state

and safety of the people and entailed grave consequences."

The report also said the party recalled an unspecified member of the Politburo's powerful Presidium, which consists of Kim and four other top officials.

The reference indicated Kim may replace his Cabinet Premier Kim Tok Hun, who would be held responsible for failures in the government's anti-epidemic

work, said Hong Min, a senior analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification.

There also was speculation that Kim Jong Un may have sacked Ri Pyong Chol, one of his top military officials. North Korean TV video of the meeting showed Ri looking downward and not participating in a vote as Kim and other senior officials on stage raised their hands to indicate their con-

Associated Press

sent on a matter that the broadcast didn't specify.

"There is no possibility that North Korea will ever admit to an infection even if there were mass transmissions, the North will definitely not reveal such developments and will continue to push forward an anti-virus campaign it has claimed to be the greatest," Hong said.

"But it's also clear that something significant happened and it was big enough to warrant a reprimanding of senior officials. This could mean mass infections or some sort of situation where a lot of people were put at direct risk of infections."

Cheong Seong-Chang, an analyst at South Korea's private Sejong Institute, expressed a similar view, saying North Korea is potentially dealing with huge virus-related problems in border towns near China, such as Sinuiju or Hyesan.

But other experts said Kim could be responding to illicit border trade that defied his lockdown measures or setting the stage for a political shakeup or purge to solidify his grip on power as he navigates perhaps the toughest time of his nine-year rule. □

Protesters mark Philippine president's last year in power



Protesters hold pictures of alleged victims of extra-judicial killings during a rally outside the Malacanang palace in Manila, Philippines on Wednesday, June 30, 2021.

Associated Press

By JOEAL CALUPITAN
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Left-wing activists and relatives of people killed in Philippine President Ro-

drigo Duterte's anti-drug campaign marked the start of his last year in office Wednesday with a noisy protest and a "countdown toward achieving justice."

Riot police prevented more than 150 flag-waving protesters from approaching the presidential palace in Manila. The demonstrators dispersed peacefully after less than an hour and police made no arrests despite a ban on such gatherings under COVID-19 restrictions.

"We count 365 days left in his reign of terror," protest leader Renato Reyes said. "We want to mark this as a countdown toward achieving justice and accountability."

The protesters held placards that read "Stop the killing, prosecute Duterte." Others carried a mock coffin, while several family members displayed portraits of mostly young people they said were victims

of extrajudicial killings in the drug crackdown.

Duterte's anti-drug campaign, in which thousands of mostly petty drug suspects have died since he took office in June 2016, has alarmed human rights groups and prompted several people to file complaints with the International Criminal Court.

"My appeal to the ICC is please don't abandon us," said Emily Soriano, whose 15-year-old son died in the crackdown. "ICC is the only one which can hold Duterte accountable for all that he did here in the Philippines in his war on drugs." The International Criminal Court's outgoing chief prosecutor said this month that a preliminary examination found reason to

believe crimes against humanity had been committed during the crackdown. The prosecutor sought authorization to open a formal investigation and the court's judges have 120 days to decide.

Duterte, a 76-year-old former mayor who made a name in politics with his extra-tough approach to crime, has denied condoning the murder of large numbers of drug suspects but has openly threatened drug dealers with death. He said suspects were killed after they violently resisted arrest, although human rights groups have reported cases of police killing unarmed suspects and then altering the crime scene to make it appear the suspects opened fire at them. □

Ethiopia's Tigray 'extremely fluid' as cease-fire in doubt

By CARA ANNA
Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) —

Ethiopia's government on Wednesday said its military could re-enter the capital of its embattled Tigray region within weeks, calling into question the unilateral cease-fire it declared in Tigray just days ago.

Ethiopia also asserted that soldiers from neighboring Eritrea, who had been collaborating with Ethiopian forces, had withdrawn from Tigray. That could not immediately be confirmed and Eritrean officials did not respond to questions, but the withdrawal would be another major development in the nearly eight-month war.

Redwan Hussein, spokesman for the Tigray emergency task force, spoke to reporters in Ethiopia's first public remarks since its soldiers retreated from the Tigray capital and other parts of the region on Monday in a dramatic turn in the fighting.

The Tigray forces that have retaken key areas after



Lieutenant-General Bacha Debele of the Ethiopian National Defense Force, right, gives a joint press conference with State Minister of Foreign Affairs and Spokesperson for the State of Emergency Taskforce Redwan Hussein, left, about the current situation in the country's northern Tigray region, in the capital Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Wednesday, June 30, 2021.

Associated Press

some of the war's fiercest fighting have rejected the cease-fire, telling The Associated Press it was a "sick joke" and vowing to chase out Ethiopian and Eritrean forces.

There will be no nego-

tiations with Ethiopia until communications, transport and other services that have been cut or destroyed for much of the war are restored, the Tigray forces' spokesman, Getachew Reda, told the AP

on Wednesday.

"We have to make sure that every inch of our territory is returned to us, the rightful owners," Getachew said, adding that Ethiopian forces are still fighting to regain territory and Eritrean

forces still control a "significant part" of the region.

That contrasted with Redwan's comment that "the Eritrean army has withdrawn" from Tigray. He didn't respond to questions for more details. The United States on Tuesday said it had not yet seen a statement from Eritrea saying it was committed to the cease-fire. The situation in Tigray remained "extremely fluid," the United Nations said, adding that Tigray forces now control the regional capital, Mekele, as well as Shire and the towns of Axum, Adwa and Adigrat.

One aid worker told the AP their organization's internal assessments showed that Eritrean forces had only pulled back to border areas.

The aid worker, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, added that "several thousand" Tigray fighters passed through Shire on Wednesday morning, saying they were going to Hitsats to the west to fight. □

Brazil's Bolsonaro fires health official after graft claims

By DIANE JEANTET

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has fired a Health Ministry official after a newspaper reported his alleged participation in a graft scheme to secure COVID-19 vaccines, further straining the government's defense of its pandemic response.

The order firing Roberto Dias, head of the Health Ministry's logistics department, was signed on Tuesday night by Bolsonaro's chief of staff, Luiz Eduardo Ramos, and published in Wednesday's official gazette.

Newspaper Folha de S.Paulo reported shortly before the decision that Dias allegedly asked a vaccine provider to inflate the prices of its doses by \$1 each in order for the mark-up to be siphoned off.

The publication quoted Luiz Paulo Domingue as say-

ing he approached Dias this year on behalf of his company, Davati Medical Supply, to negotiate the sale of 400 million AstraZeneca doses. Domingue told Folha that Dias said the Health Ministry would only purchase the vaccines if Davati agreed to the price-raising scheme, and he declined the proposal.

The Associated Press wasn't immediately able to reach Dias for comment. He did not respond to a request for comments sent to his Health Ministry email address.

The Health Ministry didn't immediately respond to a request for comment about the reason for Dias's dismissal.

A spokesperson for AstraZeneca, who asked not to be named due to company policy, denied that the firm had worked, or been in talks with Davati Medical

Supply.

"Our vaccine is not available to the private market and we don't work with intermediaries," the spokesperson said over the phone.

The allegation puts additional pressure on Bolsonaro, whose handling of the COVID-19 crisis is already being investigated by a Senate committee. Members said on Wednesday that they will look into the newspaper's reporting, which included some transcripts of Dias's emails.

The Brazilian leader in the past week was also accused of turning a blind eye to possible corruption in another deal to purchase vaccines, just weeks after the country surpassed the milestone of 500,000 COVID-19 deaths.

Luis Ricardo Miranda, another Health Ministry official overseeing its import divi-



Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro speaks during a ceremony to launch the new registration system for Professional Fishermen and Fishing Network, at the Planalto presidential palace in Brasilia, Brazil, Tuesday, June 29, 2021.

Associated Press

sion, told the Senate committee earlier this year he faced pressure to green-light the import of 20 million Covaxin vaccines from Indian pharmaceutical Bharat Biotech, and pointed to seeming irregularities in the invoices particularly a \$45 million upfront payment to a Singapore-based company. □

Bharat has denied any allegation of wrongdoing with respect to vaccine supply. Bolsonaro has denied any wrongdoing or knowledge of corruption, and told reporters earlier this week he can't know what transpires within his ministries. On Wednesday, he told supporters he doesn't fear the investigation. □



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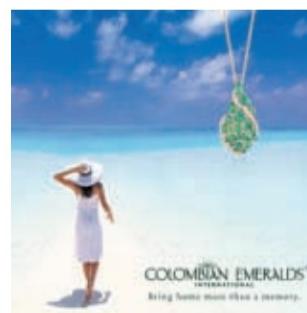
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For more information: www.colombianemeralds.com



Jolie Jewelry Boutique: Store wide discounts up to 75%

Jolie opened its doors in November 2019 in the Renaissance Mall, behind Prada. Our concept is Basics with a twist, focusing on Tops and



Dresses, with Jewelry to complete your look. Inspired by big city Fashion, we want to make you feel beautiful inside and out. Our sale is store wide up to 75%. From our Jewelry brands like Uno de 50, Tisento, Calvin Klein Rebecca and clothing from New York and LA. "For the Fashionably Elegant and Sophisticated woman".

For more information: Facebook: [Jolie Jewelry Boutique](#)

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For more information: Facebook: [Tous Aruba](#)



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For more information: Facebook: [Spadeloversaruba](#)



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Renaissance Mall is located in the heart of Oranjestad, a short walking distance from the Main Street, and opposite of the picturesque Renaissance Marina. Stores open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM. □

Aruba to me...



For today's newspaper we received a great picture from Gary Hufstetler.
He wrote:
"Aruba to me is celebrating special milestones, like our 46th wedding anniversary June 21st, 2021! At Barefoot restaurant. So many wonderful memories in Aruba over the past 27 years!".



For today's newspaper we received a great picture from **Brook Baglini from Sayre, Pennsylvania - USA**.
She wrote:
"Aruba to me is... family memories in the most beautiful place on Earth!".

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A photograph of people playing blackjack at a purple table with cards and chips.

Fisherman's Hut is a reality!

PALM BEACH — The Fisherman's Hut is open and its staff is ready to welcome you. Offering you mouthwatering dishes in a casual and laid back ambience. They are located at Playa Linda Beach Resort and is open daily from 5pm to 11pm.

Last weekend took place the soft opening of the Fisherman's Hut Restaurant, located on the premises of Playa Linda Beach Resort. This is the second location of the Pimienta Family, who has been in the restaurant business for many years. The Fisherman's Hut is a branch of their well-known restaurant The Old Fisherman which is located in front of the cruise terminal in Oranjestad. Friends and families gathered on this special night to celebrate this big achievement and invited Pastor Frank Daal to bless their new establishment.

How it all started

21 years ago the Pimienta family came up with the idea to open a restaurant where they could serve their specialties in seafood dishes in a casual ambience with affordable prices. Due to its great success with the locals and visitors throughout the years, the owners were seeking for an opportunity to open a second location closer to the high rise area. It was till the end of last year where an opportunity presented with a perfect location on the premises of Playa Linda Beach Resort. Despite the whole pandemic situation and setbacks they encountered they remained positive

and with hard work they managed to succeed. Fisherman's Hut finally became a reality.

Fisherman's hut offers a casual ambience in an open air sphere, providing their guests a feeling of going back in time to the old Aruba, while enjoying some delightful dishes, prepared by Chef Linda Sognier together with brothers Piero & Raymond Pimienta with the guidance of Ramon Pimienta. Its friendly and professional staff is ready to serve you with a big smile.

The menu

On the menu there are a great variety of dishes. Start with one of the favorite entrée namely the avocado shrimp or perhaps a salad or a taste of something more local such as the panbati with cheese.

For the main course choose between one of their dishes named after local fisherman, consisting of Catch of the day, whole fish, seafood paella, conch, shrimp, calamari, mussels and so much more. If you are in for a local dish try the authentic Keri Keri dish. There are also options for the meat lovers. Don't leave without trying one of their great desserts. So, you see there is something for everybody. Sit back, relax and enjoy the night with your family and friends at this authentic Arubian treasure.

Fisherman's Hut
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Fisherman's hut



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Opening Daily from 5.30pm- 11pm

How points and miles credit cards can ease return to travel

By MELISSA LAMBARENA of NerdWallet

As the COVID-19 vaccination era makes it safer to travel, many people who stayed home during pandemic shutdowns are vacationing again. Airport checkpoint numbers have increased about 20% from January through mid-June, 2021, compared with the same time frame in 2020, according to Transportation Security Administration data.

Rewards like points and miles earned from a travel credit card can help you get to a long-awaited dream destination, especially as a new cardholder. Currently, there's no shortage of generous sign-up offers for those with good credit (a FICO score of 690 or higher), but before accepting one, consider whether a travel credit card aligns with your spending.

Even for globe-trotters, a travel credit card might not be compatible with habits or financial circumstances. Weigh these factors to determine what's right for you. WHEN A TRAVEL CREDIT CARD MAKES SENSE

Travel credit card options are abundant. There are general travel credit cards that allow flexible redemptions and co-branded travel credit cards allow travel redemptions with certain hotel brands, airlines or



This Aug. 11, 2019, file photo shows a Visa logo on a credit card in New Orleans. This Aug. 11, 2019, file photo shows a Visa logo on a credit card in New Orleans.

Associated Press

third-party travel websites. These types of credit cards may be useful if you travel regularly, have no debt and pay the bill in full each month to avoid interest charges. Otherwise, the high interest rate on these cards chips away at the value of rewards. If you check off these boxes, then you could consider a travel credit card.

Teaming a travel card up with a travel savings fund can also prevent unwanted budget surprises like costs that aren't covered by credit card rewards. If

you want to go somewhere in six to 12 months, then set aside money from each paycheck to avoid debt, says Kelly Luethje, a certified financial planner and founder of the Willow Planning Group in New Hampshire. "You might not have accumulated the points you need to cover a whole trip, so I do like a travel fund to help supplement what you don't have accumulated on the credit card," she says.

MUST-HAVES FOR A TRAVEL CREDIT CARD

A travel credit card should

make traveling easier and less expensive. Depending on where and how often you travel, the desirable features may vary.

For Christine Lozada, a California resident creator of the YouTube channel "Where In The World is CL," a travel credit card and its perks were essential for her jet-setting lifestyle.

She says that the access her travel credit card allows at airport lounges is "huge for me."

Your priorities might differ, but here are some factors to consider:

— Annual fees. Consider travel credit cards with steep annual fees only if the card's perks can offset the cost. Less frequent travelers may get more value from a no-annual-fee credit card.

— Introductory offers. A sign-up bonus can cover the cost of a vacation, but overspending to meet the requirements to earn one defeats the purpose. Instead, plan to apply for a travel credit card around a high-spending month or season to meet bonus requirements with in-budget purchases.

— Rewards. Look for a rewards rate of 1.5% or 2% of your spending. Depending on a card's terms, the value of rewards may increase or decrease with different redemption options. Travel redemptions typically get the best value. In some cases, you can maximize rewards by transferring points to loyalty programs. Lozada transferred points from her credit card to her hotel loyalty rewards program to get even more value for her points. She used them toward a stay in Carlsbad, California.

— A broad merchant network. You'll likely have fewer hiccups abroad with a travel credit card that belongs to the globally accepted Visa or Mastercard networks. □

Gates Foundation commits \$2.1B to advance gender equality

Bill and Melinda Gates' namesake foundation announced Wednesday it will spend \$2.1 billion to advance global gender equality. It comes as private donors, government officials and civil society leaders gather at a forum in Paris to make financial and political commitments aimed at aiding women and girls.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation said it will spend the money in the next five years on health and family planning programs, economic empowerment projects and other initiatives. Advancing gender equal-

ity is a core area for the Seattle-based foundation, the largest private charitable group in the United States with an endowment of nearly \$50 billion. It gives about \$5 billion annually through its philanthropic work, but its future - and leadership structure - have been called into question following Bill and Melinda's recent divorce.

The foundation's pledge was made in tandem with the Generation Equality Forum convened by UN Women in Paris. More commitments are expected from donors during the event, which comes nearly

a year after the U.N. commemorated the 25th anniversary of the landmark 1995 Beijing women's conference. About 190 countries had adopted the gender equality roadmap at the 1995 event, but many said last year they had not reached their goals.

"The world has been fighting for gender equality for decades, but progress has been slow," Melinda French Gates said in the announcement, adding that it was time to "reignite a movement and deliver real change."

French Gates, as well as Vice President Kamala Har-



In this Feb. 1, 2019, file photo Bill and Melinda Gates are interviewed in Kirkland, Wash.

Associated Press

ris and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, are

expected to speak at the Forum. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Scout's base	1 Iron, for one
5 Insurance agent's number	2 Flying: Prefix
10 Lewd look	3 "Never Let —"
11 Dawn goddess	(Kazuo Ishiguro novel)
12 Yen	4 Knotty snack
13 Nursery item	5 Bee product
14 Old West cemetery	6 Russian range
16 Flashy 1940s attire	7 Alley —
20 Hardens deg.	8 Number after du
23 CEO's aunt	9 Lobed organ
24 Tom's aunt	11 Baja "By
25 Had aspirations	15 Sacred
27 Money machine	17 Diamond workers
28 Forces out of bed	
29 Tug sound	
32 Float ingredient	
36 Curie discovery	
39 Not busy	
40 Bee abode	
41 Kitchen herb	
42 Spa treatments	
43 Remain	

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three U's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-1

CRYPTOQUOTE

MOWJW EN HSJW MOLB SBW
XLF MS AVJB L ASSR. LBG MOW
XSJQG EN UVQQ SU TWSTQW
JVB BEBP LASVM XEMO QEM
HILMYOWN. — JLF AJLGAVJE
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE RIGHT TO BE
LET ALONE IS INDEED THE BEGINNING OF ALL
FREEDOM. WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS



This aerial photo provided by the Blue Lake Rancheria shows a solar array that is paired with a microgrid in Blue Lake, Calif., in 2017.

Associated Press

California tests off-the-grid solutions to power outages

By DAISY NGUYEN
SAN FRANCISCO (AP)

— When a wildfire torched through Briceburg nearly two years ago, the tiny community on the edge of Yosemite National Park lost the only power line connecting it to the electrical grid.

Rather than rebuilding poles and wires over increasingly dry hillsides, which could raise the risk of equipment igniting catastrophic fires, the nation's largest utility decided to give Briceburg a self-reliant power system.

The stand-alone grid made of solar panels, batteries and a backup generator began operating this month. It's the first of potentially hundreds of its kind as Pacific Gas & Electric works to prevent another deadly fire like the one that forced it to file for bankruptcy in 2019.

The ramping up of this technology is among a number of strategies to improve energy resilience in California as a cycle of extreme heat, drought and wildfires hammers the U.S. West, triggering massive blackouts and threatening the power supply in the country's most populous state. Other tactics include raising the cost of electricity during high-demand hours when it's most expensive to produce.

it and offering cash and prizes to conserve energy when the grid is strained.

"I don't think anyone in the world anticipated how quickly the changes brought on by climate change would manifest. We're all scrambling to deal with that," said Peter Lehman, the founding director of the Schatz Energy Research Center, a clean energy institute in Arcata. The response follows widespread blackouts in California in the past two years that exposed the power grid's vulnerability to weather. Fierce windstorms led utilities to deliberately shut off power to large swaths of the state to keep high-voltage transmission lines from sparking fire. There have been more than 100

last summer, an oppressive heat wave triggered the first rolling outages in 20 years. More than 800,000 homes and businesses lost power over two days in August.

During both crises, a Native American reservation on California's far northern coast kept the electricity flowing with the help of two microgrids that can disconnect from the larger electrical grid and switch to using solar energy generated and stored in battery banks on its hotel casitas.

As most of rural Humboldt County sat in the dark dur-

ing a planned shutoff in October 2019, the Blue Lake Rancheria became a lifeline for thousands of its neighbors: The gas station and convenience store provided fuel and supplies, the hotel housed patients who needed a place to plug in medical devices, the local newspaper used the conference room to put out the next day's edition, and a hatchery continued pumping water to keep its fish alive.

"We've had outages before, but they were not severe. This one lasted almost three days for us," said Shad Overton, a manager at Mad River Hatchery. "The electricity from the microgrid pumped the diesel fuel we needed for our generator."

During a few hours of rolling blackouts last August, the reservation's microgrids went into "island mode" to help ease stress on the state's maxed-out grid.

"We seemed to arrive just in time to handle these emergencies, but it's about good governance over the last decades that paid attention to ... what tribal elders were saying about how the conditions were changing, and taking that information and planning for it," said Jana Ganion, the tribe's director of sustainability. □

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Branson's Virgin Orbit launches 7 satellites from 747 plane

By MARCIA DUNN
 AP Aerospace Writer
 Richard Branson's Virgin Orbit delivered satellites from three countries into space Wednesday, its second successful rocket launch from a plane. The company's modified 747 jet dubbed Cosmic Girl jet took off from California's Mojave Desert, carrying the 70-foot (21-meter) rocket beneath its left wing. Once the plane was over the Pacific near the Channel Islands, the LauncherOne rocket peeled away, then fired its engine

to head to space. The drop occurred at an altitude of about 37,000 feet (11,000 meters). Camera views showed the package of seven small satellites on the end of the second stage, against the curve of the blue Earth. The satellites are from the U.S. Defense Department, the Royal Netherlands Air Force and Poland's SatRevolution company, which is working to set up an Earth-observing constellation. Virgin Orbit later declared success, saying the satellites were in the proper or-



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'Summer of Soul' may be the best doc of the year

By LINDSEY BAHR

In the summer of 1969, the same summer as Woodstock, some of the biggest musical acts of the time, like Stevie Wonder, B.B. King, Nina Simone, Sly & the Family Stone, Mahalia Jackson and the Fifth Dimension all performed in New York's Mount Morris Park.

Woodstock was immortalized. The Harlem Cultural Festival forgotten. But the event is given new light in the must-see documentary "Summer of Soul (...Or When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)."

Over the course six weekends, some 300,000 people would pass through what is now Marcus Garvey Park to watch the marquee names on the schedule, with the Black Panthers providing security. The brainchild of a born promoter, Tony Lawrence, the free summer concert series was sponsored by Maxwell Coffee and covered by the local news. General Foods even had the foresight to commission someone to film the festival, hiring television veteran Hal Tulchin for the task. The money was so short, they faced the stage west to save on lighting.

By the end, Tulchin, who died in 2017, had amassed some 40 hours of footage



This image released by Searchlight Pictures shows Sly Stone performing at the Harlem Cultural Festival in 1969, featured in the documentary "Summer of Soul."

Associated Press

of the performances, the massive crowds, the political speeches and the comedy acts. After some failed efforts to sell or do something with it, even with its new nickname "Black Woodstock," it sat in a basement, largely unseen, for five decades — that is until Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson dusted it off and made out of it a strong contender for the best documentary of the year.

In "Summer of Soul," Quest-

love pulls off an extraordinary feat turning these endless hours of footage into not just an exciting concert film, but an elegant and essential historical document of a particularly fraught and powerful moment in history. It is sometimes celebratory, sometimes critical and never less than utterly engaging. And although it's Questlove's first film, you'd never know it.

It is extraordinary how much information and mu-

sic is packed into these two hours. The film delves into the various musical styles of the moment, how some artists like Stevie Wonder and David Ruffin were evolving, the diversity of Harlem itself, the Puerto Rican influence (with commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda), the divisions in the community (including an emotional Marilyn McCoo talking about the criticisms that the Fifth Dimension had a "white sound") as well as the local

and national sociopolitical context. And somehow nothing feels like it's getting the short shrift.

Questlove and editor Joshua L. Pearson also know when to feature a full performance as opposed to just clips for ultimate impact. There's a reason Nina Simone and "Backlash Blues" is saved for last.

And though the performances are riveting — standouts include Mahalia Jackson and Mavis Staples belting out "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" and the Edwin Hawkins Singers' "O Happy Day" — it's the shots of the all-ages crowd that makes this film come alive, with the vibrant fashions, the incredible faces, the excitement, the boredom and the humanity of it all packed into every frame.

The question of why this seminal event could be so unknown hovers over every frame. There is an answer provided at the very end, but just be warned: It's not a satisfying one. If there is any quibble with "Summer of Soul," it's that this wasn't interrogated more. But the film perhaps is smarter to not dwell on that fact. Instead, it's correcting the wrong and giving this festival its long overdue moment in the sun. □

'Halloween' comes to Venice as Curtis gets lifetime award



Jamie Lee Curtis attends the National Board of Review Awards gala in New York on Jan. 8, 2020.

Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The Venice Film Festival is awarding its lifetime achievement

award this year to Jamie Lee Curtis, the American actor best known for her

decadeslong run in the "Halloween" slasher franchise.

Curtis will pick up the Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement on Sept. 8, when the latest installment, "Halloween Kills," is screened on Venice's Lido out of competition.

The world's oldest film festival runs Sept. 1-11 and will feature the world premiere of "Dune," Denis Villeneuve's adaptation of the sci-fi bestseller. Venice was the only major international film festival to have in-person screenings last year during the summertime lull in the pandemic.

Curtis' film career was launched in 1978 with the

now-classic "Halloween" directed by John Carpenter. The daughter of Hollywood royalty Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh, Curtis went onto other star turns, including in "A Fish Called Wanda" and "True Lies."

In a statement released by festival organizers, Curtis said she couldn't believe she had been acting long enough to deserve a lifetime achievement. She also said she was honored to receive the award at the same time a new chapter of Laurie Strode's quest to vanquish the masked Michael Myers is coming out.

"Halloween — and my partnership with Laurie

Strode — launched and sustained my career, and to have these films evolve into a new franchise that is beloved by audiences around the world was, and remains, a gift," she said.

Festival director Alberto Barbera said Curtis' four-decade career as well as her work as a children's book author and commitment to charitable causes put her in "that rarefied group of Hollywood actors who best reflect the qualities that are the very soul of the global film industry and its legacy." Recent winners of the lifetime Golden Lion include Tilda Swinton, Pedro Almodovar and Vanessa Redgrave. □

Kyrgios 'not bad for a part-time player' in Wimbledon win

By HOWARD FENDRICH

WIMBLEDON, England (AP)

— Nick Kyrgios was back on the scene at Wimbledon, offering his inimitable brand of showmanship and shot-making, with tennis by turns exhilarating and exasperating.

Even if he hadn't played on tour at all since February, even if he came in with a grand total of 15 matches of competition over the past 18 months, Kyrgios showed he still can deliver the goods when he puts his mind to it.

Just a handful of days after finishing the lengthy trek from the comforts of home in Canberra, Australia, to the grass courts of the All England Club — leaving the carefully calibrated practice and prep to others — Kyrgios made quite a return, edging No. 21 seed Ugo Humbert 6-4, 4-6, 3-6, 6-1, 9-7 on Wednesday in a match suspended at 3-all in the last set a night earlier because of an 11 p.m. local curfew.

"Not bad for a part-time player," a smiling Kyrgios told the crowd at No. 1 Court, letting them know his plans for the rest of the day included playing video games with his girlfriend at the tournament's "bubble" hotel.

His was one of more than



Venus Williams of the US after losing a point to Tunisia's Ons Jabeur during the women's singles second round match on day three of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London, Wednesday June 30, 2021.

Associated Press

two dozen first-round contests that wound up finishing on Day 3 after rain Monday and Tuesday scrambled the schedule and contributed to the slickness of the courts that left some players sliding and stumbling.

So while 19-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic — who made only six unforced errors and beat two-time major finalist Kevin Anderson 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 — and others such as Frances Tiafoe, Fabio Fognini, Garbiñe Muguruza and Iga Swiatek reached the third round on a chilly,

overcast and busy day, some were just making their way into the second: Aryna Sabalenka, Jelena Ostapenko, Victoria Azarenka, Marin Cilic, Felix Auger-Aliassime and Taylor Fritz, among them.

Sofia Kenin, the Australian Open champion and French Open runner-up in 2020, and 41-year-old Venus Williams, who won five of her seven major championships at Wimbledon, lost in the second round. Kenin's departure means 7 of the 11 highest-ranked women already are missing

from the bracket, including defending champion Simona Halep and Naomi Osaka — who both withdrew before the tournament — and Serena Williams, who injured her right leg when she slipped during her match Tuesday and couldn't continue.

Djokovic dealt with some less-serious footing issues but otherwise was pretty close to impeccable against Anderson, who smacked 41 aces in his opening match but managed only 11 on Wednesday.

"Still a long way to go. Hopefully I can go very deep in the tournament. That's the goal," said Djokovic, who seeks a third Wimbledon trophy in a row and sixth overall and is now 16-0 in Grand Slam matches in 2021. "But I'm very pleased with the way I've been playing so far."

As was Kyrgios, for the most part, wagging his racket to ask the fans for more noise as he strutted around after his best shots.

Then again, he also shook his head or told himself he was "rubbish" after many a miss.

Here's something else he seems to do quite a bit: store up every negative thing he reads or hears about himself and either use it as motivation or merely mock it.

"Look, a lot of people were telling me: 'There's no chance. There's no point in you going with that short preparation.' I was hearing a load of things. (Someone was) telling me, 'There's no chance you can come off the couch and compete at this level,'" said the 26-year-old Kyrgios, whose 2014 debut at Wimbledon included a win against Rafael Nadal on the way to the quarterfinals, a round he hasn't reached since at the tournament. □

AP source: IOC to expand soccer rosters to 22 for Olympics

By ROB HARRIS and ANNE M. PETERSON
AP Sports Writers

Olympic soccer rosters will be expanded from 18 players to 22 for the Tokyo Olympics, a person with knowledge of the change told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Teams can include 22 players on squads, but must stay with 18 on team sheets for individual matches, said the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the change had not been formally announced by the International Olympic Committee.

The change was consid-

ered because of the challenges teams faced as a result of the pandemic.

Olympic squads are normally limited to 18 players, including four alternates. At any time during the tournament, teams can make a roster change due to injury — unlike in the World Cup, when rosters are frozen after the first match. However, World Cup rosters can include 23 players.

Wednesday was the deadline for countries competing in the Olympic soccer tournament to finalize their rosters.

U.S. women's national team coach Vlatko An-

donovski said he anticipated some kind of change to the roster rules.

"We're getting word from the IOC that we will have a little flexibility on the roster. We're very happy about it, and as of right now we're just waiting to see a little more details on what all the rules and regulations are going to look like," Andonovski said.

Because there had been previous talk about using expanded rosters, Andonovski said the United States was preparing for that possibility.

"Obviously we thought about about it, we were preparing in some ways for



United States women's national soccer team coach Vlatko Andonovski talks with Megan Rapinoe, center, and Alex Morgan before an international friendly soccer match against Portugal in Houston, in this Thursday, June 10, 2021, file photo.

Associated Press

it if it happened, so we're hoping to be ready if the changes are in place," Andonovski said. □

Tadej Pogacar routs rivals in Tour de France time trial

LAVAL, France (AP) — Tadej Pogacar waited until the penultimate stage to take control of the Tour de France last year.

The young Slovenian rider did it after only five stages this summer, with a stunning display in Wednesday's time trial that won't be forgotten by his rivals.

In the first big battle between the main contenders — a 27.2-kilometer (16.9-mile) test against the clock coming early in the race — Pogacar reigned supreme, powering to victory to assert himself as the favorite at the showcase event.

"Today was a really good day for me. I didn't do any mistakes," Pogacar said.

The 22-year-old UAE Team Emirates leader did not seize the yellow jersey but gained time over his main rivals.

Just look at the damage: Pogacar was 44 seconds faster than last year's runner-up, Primoz Roglic, while 2018 champion Geraint Thomas dropped 1 minute, 18 seconds. Richard Carapaz, a former Giro champion with big ambitions at the Tour this year, was 1:44 off the pace.

World champion Julian Alaphilippe was among the day's losers, 1:11 off Pogacar's pace.

"The goal was not to lose time, but I gained time so I'm super happy. I'm just excited for the whole Tour," Pogacar said.

The Tour is a race of attrition and remains wide open. But the mountain stages



Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar competes during the fifth stage of the Tour de France cycling race, an individual time-trial over 27.2 kilometers (16.9 miles) with start in Change and finish in Laval Espace Mayenne, France, Wednesday, June 30, 2021.

Associated Press

in the Alps and the Pyrenees will be crucial, and Pogacar proved last year — when he became the second-youngest winner in the race history — that he can compete with the best climbers.

In addition, he has a stronger team this year and the Tour is less mountainous. More importantly, another long time trial will be on the program on the eve of the finish on the Champs Elysees.

Pogacar lagged 39 seconds behind leader Mathieu van der Poel at the start of Stage 5 in the western Mayenne region on Wednesday and erased a big chunk of the deficit to move into second place in

the general classification. Van der Poel has limited abilities in high mountains and is not expected to remain in the mix once the race reaches the Alps later this week.

"I won't keep (the yellow jersey) in the mountains, but I like Tadej, he is a very nice guy and it's really amazing what he does," said Van der Poel.

Pogacar had no rival on the technical loop from Changé to Laval. Not even the best specialists in the discipline could provide a challenge. Pogacar unleashed his power on the long stretches of flat roads and did not lose his tempo on the hills scattered along the

course. Riding in an aerodynamic position, Pogacar perfectly negotiated the sharp curves of the finale and covered the route in 32 minutes, at an average speed of 51 kph (32 mph).

"In the last few time trials I did mistakes because I started super fast.

Here with little climbs, I started pacing myself pretty good and found a perfect rhythm until the end," he said.

Pogacar snatched the yellow jersey in a high-drama time trial on the eve of the finish in Paris last year. He became the first rider Wednesday to win two consecutive time trials at the Tour since Bradley Wiggins in 2012.

Van der Poel fought hard in the closing stages and produced his best time trial ever to keep the coveted yellow jersey, crossing the line exhausted with his mouth wide open.

"I surprised myself today," said Van der Poel, who rides for the Alpecin-Fenix team. "I'm really proud of this performance. When I said I was going to lose the jersey today it was not a lie, it's not my specialty."

Pogacar was 19 seconds faster than time trial specialist Stefan Kung. Jonas Vingegaard was third, 27 seconds behind.

Overall, Pogacar lags eight seconds behind Van der Poel.

Roglic, who was Pogacar's main rival last year, said he was proud of his performance following his heavy crash two days earlier.

"It's hard, definitely. All the time trials are always very painful, let's say it like that," Roglic said. "But I just missed some power. I really squeezed totally everything out of myself."

Thomas was also recovering from a crash and said he did the best he could.

"Obviously, I didn't feel 100% but I don't want to bang on about that, I tried to do what I could and it wasn't enough really," he said. "I woke up this morning and felt terrible, but once I got going and loosened up it was better. It's just one of those things that you have to crack on and deal with — just keep fighting I guess." □



By RONALD BLUM
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fired New York Mets general manager Jared Porter was suspended by Major League Baseball through

at least the end of the 2022 regular season following an investigation that began after a report that he sent sexually explicit text messages and images to a female reporter in 2016

Fired Mets GM Porter suspended by MLB through 2022 season

while he was working for the Chicago Cubs.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred announced the discipline Wednesday without saying specifically what the investigation had found. "My office has completed its investigation into alleged inappropriate conduct by Jared Porter," Manfred said in a statement. "Having reviewed all of the available

evidence, I have concluded that Mr. Porter violated MLB's policies, and that placement on the ineligible list is warranted."

Porter is eligible to apply for reinstatement after the final game of the 2022 regular season, a timetable that could allow him to apply for front-office openings that October. Porter was fired by the Mets on Jan. 19, about

nine hours after ESPN reported that he sent dozens of unanswered texts to the woman, including a picture of "an erect, naked penis." ESPN said it obtained a copy of the text history, and some of the messages and photos Porter sent were displayed in the report online.

Porter was fired by the team for cause, and MLB started its investigation. □